



Canadian
Cancer
Society

Société
canadienne
du cancer

Prevention Series

Prostate Cancer

How to reduce your risk



Let's Make Cancer History

1 888 939-3333 | www.cancer.ca

Prostate Cancer

How to reduce your risk

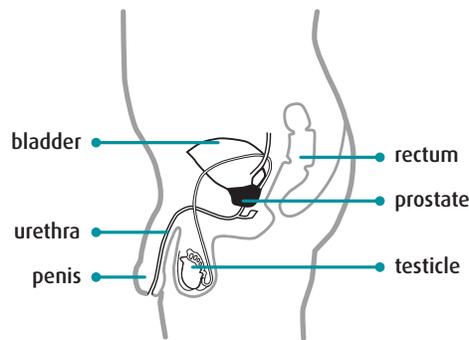
Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in Canadian men. Nobody knows the exact causes of prostate cancer, so we can't tell you exactly how to prevent it. With research, we are learning more about who is at risk for the disease and how you can reduce your risk.

If you are over the age of 50, it's time to talk to your doctor about whether you should be tested for prostate cancer. The introductory information in this brochure can help you understand more about prostate cancer and how you can reduce your risk of this disease.

The prostate and cancer

The prostate is part of the male reproductive system. It makes part of the liquid (seminal fluid) that mixes with sperm from the testicles to make semen.

It is located close to the rectum, just below the bladder at the base of the penis. The prostate surrounds the urethra, the tube that carries urine and semen through the penis.



The prostate is about the size of a large walnut. As you get older, your prostate may get bigger and restrict the flow of urine. This condition, which is very common, is called *benign prostatic hyperplasia* (BPH). It is not cancer but causes some of the same symptoms as prostate cancer.

Prostate cancer develops when cells in the prostate begin to multiply out of control and form a tumour. Some cells may break away, starting tumours in other parts of the body.

In many men prostate cancer grows quickly and needs to be treated right away. But in some men, prostate cancer grows slowly and may not cause any serious health problems.

Know the risks

There is no single cause of prostate cancer, but some factors appear to increase the risk of developing it. The risk of prostate cancer increases as men grow older. Having these risk factors doesn't mean that you *will* develop prostate cancer. It means that your *chances* of developing it are higher.

You may be at higher risk if you:

- are over age 65
- have a family history of prostate cancer
- are of African ancestry

There is some evidence that there is a link between diet and prostate cancer but more study is needed. Obesity, physical inactivity and working with a metal called cadmium are also being studied as possible risk factors.

It is possible to develop prostate cancer without having any of these risk factors.

Reduce your risk

You can't change the main risk factors for prostate cancer, such as your age, your family history and your ancestry. While the evidence about a healthy diet reducing prostate cancer risk isn't certain, if you're worried about your risk, you might think about making changes to your diet. After all, eating well has many other health benefits. You can:

Eat less fat

- Limit total fat intake to 20–30% of total calories.
- Eat less red meat (no more than 2 times a week).
- Eat smaller portions of red meat and poultry (a palm-sized portion).
- Replace meat with fish that is high in omega-3 fatty acids twice a week.
- Replace meat with legumes (dried beans or peas), which are a low-fat meat alternative.
- Use less margarine, butter and cream. Choose lower-fat dairy products (milk and yogurt with less than 2% M.F.).
- Use less or no fats (such as butter or margarine) when cooking. Avoid frying or deep-frying. Use fat substitutes such as applesauce in baking.

Eat a diet high in vegetables and fruit

- Choose 5 to 10 servings of vegetables and fruit every day.
- Try to eat vegetables from the mustard and cabbage family 5 or more times a week. (Broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and Brussels sprouts are part of this family.) Some studies have shown that diets high in these vegetables may reduce the risk of prostate cancer.
- Try to include foods that are rich in the antioxidant lycopene in your diet. Some studies suggest this may reduce your risk of prostate cancer. The best source of

lycopene is tomatoes. (Other sources are watermelon, pink grapefruit and papaya.) The body uses lycopene best when the tomatoes have been cooked, and a small amount of oil has been used in cooking.

Talk to your doctor about calcium

Some studies have shown that diets very high in calcium may slightly increase your risk of prostate cancer. Calcium is an important part of a healthy diet. But if you think your diet is very high in calcium, and you're concerned about your risk of prostate cancer you may want to talk to your doctor.

Report symptoms to your doctor

The following symptoms may be caused by prostate cancer or by other less serious health problems. See your doctor if you have:

- the need to urinate often, especially at night
- difficult or painful urination
- dribbling urination
- weak, decreased or interrupted urine stream
- blood in the urine or semen
- a feeling that the bladder hasn't completely emptied
- pain during ejaculation

Don't ignore symptoms

If you have any of these symptoms, don't ignore them. See your doctor. You may need to have some tests to help find out what is causing them.

Tests to help diagnose prostate cancer

If you report prostate problems to your doctor, your doctor may suggest a physical examination, a blood test or both. Using these tests together is better than using either test alone. If a problem is found, more tests will be needed.

Digital rectal examination (DRE)

During a DRE, your doctor places a gloved finger into the rectum to feel the prostate gland. Most prostate cancers develop in the part of the prostate that lies closest to the rectum. This makes it easy to feel for lumps or changes in size or consistency.

If your doctor feels something abnormal you may need to have more tests.

Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test

The PSA test is a blood test. It measures a substance called prostate-specific antigen made by the prostate. It is normal to find small quantities of PSA in the blood but problems with your prostate can cause your PSA level to rise.

PSA levels vary according to age and tend to rise gradually in men over 60. They can go up and down for different reasons. Elevated levels of PSA can be caused by several prostate problems, not necessarily cancer. Sometimes men with prostate cancer still have normal PSA levels.

Reasons for having a higher than normal PSA level

PSA levels may be higher than normal for your age for many reasons, such as:

- enlarged prostate (benign prostatic hyperplasia)
- inflamed or infected prostate (prostatitis)
- medical test on the prostate (such as biopsy or transrectal ultrasound)
- cancer cells in prostate

No specific PSA level can confirm if you have cancer or not, but a high PSA level may suggest that cancer is present. More tests will be needed to confirm a diagnosis of cancer.

Talk to your doctor about testing

Your doctor can check your prostate for signs of cancer before you have any symptoms.

If you are over the age of 50, talk to your doctor about whether you should be tested for prostate cancer before any symptoms appear.

If you are at a higher risk because of your family history or African ancestry, talk to your doctor about whether you should be tested from an earlier age.

Benefits and risks of testing

The PSA and DRE tests can help detect prostate cancer early, but they can also cause “false alarms” or miss prostate cancer that is present. In some cases, these tests can detect prostate cancer that may not pose a serious threat to your health. It is important to talk to your doctor about your personal risk of developing prostate cancer, and about the benefits and risks of testing.

Questions to ask your doctor

What’s my risk of prostate cancer?

What tests should I have, if any?

What are the pros and cons of having the tests?

Is there a cost for the tests and if so, how much?

What happens if my results aren’t normal?

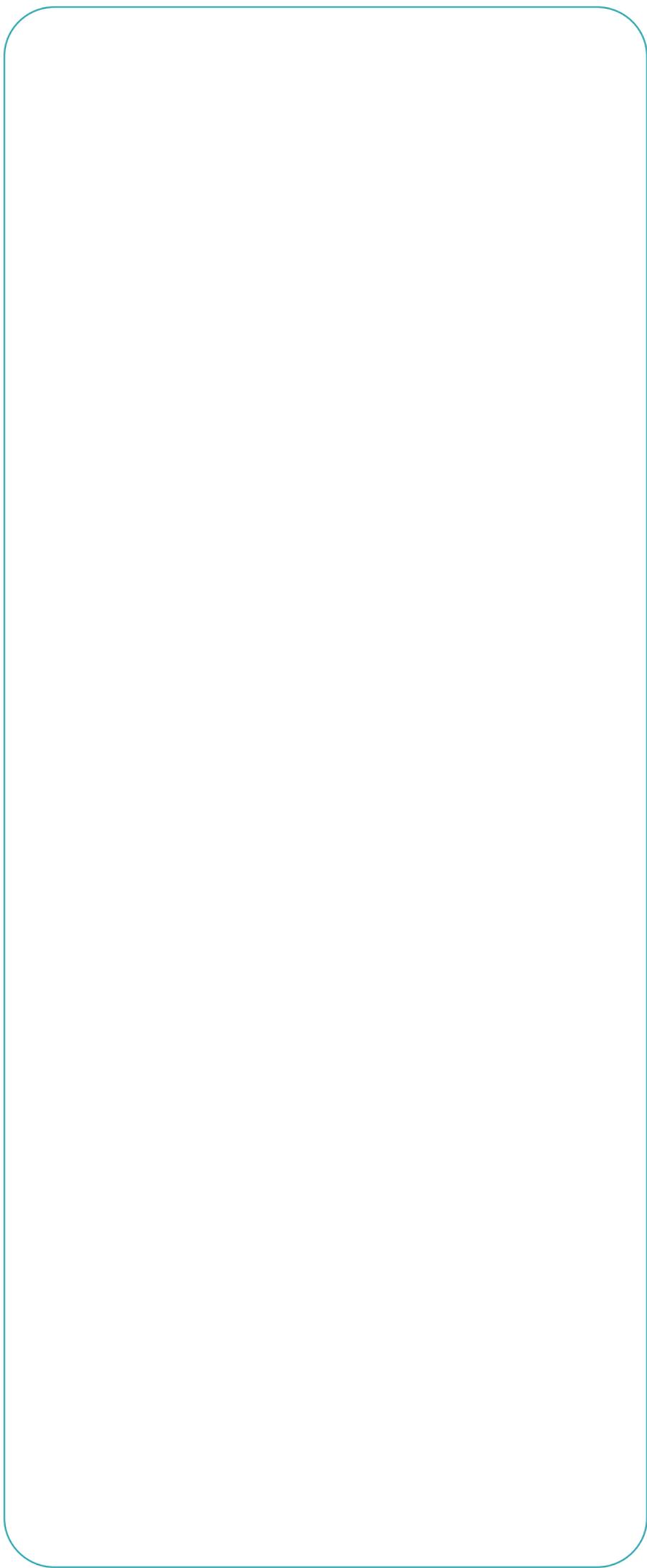
How often should I be tested?

Find out more

If you want to know more about reducing your risk of prostate cancer or detecting it early:

- Call an information specialist toll-free at **1 888 939-3333** Monday to Friday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- E-mail us at **info@cis.cancer.ca**.
- Visit our website at **www.cancer.ca**.
- Contact your local Canadian Cancer Society office.





What we do

Thanks to the work of our volunteers and staff, and the generosity of our donors, the Canadian Cancer Society is leading the way in the fight against cancer. The Canadian Cancer Society:

- funds excellent research for all types of cancer
- advocates for healthy public policy
- promotes healthy lifestyles to help reduce cancer risk
- provides information about cancer
- supports people living with cancer

Contact us for up-to-date information about cancer, our services, or to make a donation.

This brochure is part of the [Canadian Cancer Society's Prevention Series](#). Contact us for more titles, including brochures on prostate cancer, skin cancer and more.



Canadian Cancer Society
Société canadienne du cancer

Let's Make Cancer History

1 888 939-3333 | www.cancer.ca

This is general information developed by the Canadian Cancer Society. It is not intended to replace the advice of a qualified healthcare provider.

The material in this publication may be copied or reproduced without permission; however, the following citation must be used:
Prostate Cancer: How to reduce your risk. Canadian Cancer Society 2007.